



June 9, 2004

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**RE: MM Docket No. 99-325**

Dear. Ms. Dortch:

The Nebraska Public Radio Foundation was established nearly 15 years ago to assist the State of Nebraska in finding ways to fund the great hunger this state has for public radio.

As President of the foundation I can attest that this service is valued by the people of Nebraska and provides a service many, many find vital. If anything, people here want more! More news, more classical music, more "Car Talk," more "A Prairie Home Companion," and more programming which helps fill the great gaps in radio choices and services which exist.

Yet with the thirst and demonstrated need for more services comes the harsh realism that the State of Nebraska cannot afford to build a multi-station radio system which would serve every one of our hundreds of rural communities.

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The Nebraska Public Radio Network, like many stations in rural areas, serves a large geographic area with a relatively sparse population. In a state stretching 500 miles east to

west, two-thirds of the population lives within 50 miles of the eastern border and most of that two-thirds is in the city of Omaha.

Ten of the nation's 25 least-populated counties are in Nebraska (and so are six of the nation's 15 poorest). In some of the state, the Nebraska Public Radio Network broadcasts the only FM radio signal available. Like many public radio networks in Western states, it would be impossible for us to provide public radio programming to most communities in Nebraska without state funding. As is the case in many states the current economy has caused state governments to cut back on public broadcasting expenditures.

While the State of Nebraska continues to provide as much financial support as it can for public radio across the state through a series of 9 transmitters, which broadcast a single program at a time, it is unlikely those served by transmitters outside of the two major cities will ever receive more public radio than they now have with current technology.

However, the advent of terrestrial digital radio broadcast with its promise of multiplexing two program streams from a single transmitter puts multiple public radio services to rural, underserved, and even unserved, audiences within the realm of financial reason.

This is the only practical means of broadcast service extension available to an underserved population in a state of this size and a population this rural. It is for this reason we urge the Commission to adopt the HD Radio supplemental audio channel proposal under consideration.

We at the Foundation strongly support this new technology and its promise of greater public service to the people of our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mastera", with a large, sweeping loop on the left side.

James A. Mastera, EVP